

**Washington Talking Book & Braille Library
Administered by the Washington State Library
and Office of the Secretary of State**

**Reading Matters
Winter/Spring 2012
*David Junius, Editor***

A Message from Danielle Miller, Program Manager

The motto “Winter is Coming,” from the House Stark in George R.R. Martin’s *Song of Ice and Fire* series, suggests warning, constant vigilance and preparation. I like to think of this as the epic fantasy version of “the legislative session is coming” or the “revenue forecast is coming.” We’ve been vigilant and have strived to be prepared. All things considered, your own Talking Book & Braille Library is still getting out books and doing all we can to provide much-needed services.

The Patron Advisory Council (PAC) continues to work on the library’s and its patrons’ behalf, and it welcomed two new members in January. Our new members are Becky Bell and Frank Johnson. At our February PAC meeting we thanked Mike Mello, our previous chair, for all of his work and leadership and passed the gavel to the new PAC chair, Sue Ammeter. The other officers for the PAC are Frank Cuta as vice chair and Karen Johnson as secretary.

I am positive that WTBBL has the best and most-dedicated volunteers and donors. With the loss of funding and staff for the Evergreen Radio Reading Service (ERRS) at the end of 2011, things looked grim. However, patron donors allowed us to buy equipment that sends our broadcast to radio stations in Seattle, the Tri-Cities and Spokane free of charge. The stations also agreed to waive

their fees for airing our signal. Most importantly, a core group of radio volunteers is continuing to produce several local programs including The Seattle Times, “TV Times,” “Grocery Cart,” “Shopping News,” and “Eastern Bargains.” As we transition to a new model for the ERRS, you can expect some changes and fluctuation in what you are hearing. I strongly encourage you to contact me and let me know how the ERRS is working for you and what we can do to make it better.

We have a lot coming up, including our quarterly book clubs, volunteer appreciation event, our centenarian patron celebration, and many conferences and outreach visits. In the next couple of months, our website will be getting a facelift, so don’t be surprised if things look different. We will ensure that the site is accessible and easy to navigate, as well as attractive and useful.

Our local audio book and braille production departments are continuing to turn out excellent books for our collection, and we’ve started making cartridge copies of books that were previously only available for download on BARD. Day by day, there are more and more audio books to choose from.

To take another quote from George R.R. Martin, “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies; the man who never reads lives only one.” WTBBL has the first four books of the *Song of Ice and Fire* series -- DB45742, DB49913, DB51406, DB62348 – for you to enjoy.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Danielle
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Braille Department Update by Ed Godfrey

Our 12 students in the 2011-2012 braille transcription class are now more than halfway through the course. The class began last October and is due to end in June. Class sessions are held weekly on Wednesday evenings. We look forward to our graduates helping to transform print into braille for our patrons in the coming year.

WTBBL's seven proofreading teams continue their great work checking the accuracy of the volunteer braillists' transcriptions and making corrections as needed. We currently have 10 books in review mode, so we look forward to adding those to our stacks soon!

The new WTBBL Collection Development Committee is identifying new titles for both braille and audio production. We all look forward to the new materials and getting those in the transcription and recording workflow.

The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) recently announced that the new *Braille Formats* rules have been approved by the BANA board. The transcribers and proofreaders look forward to applying the new rules, which will soon be published and posted online.

Good things are happening in the Braille Department! Thanks for your patronage and support.

Locally Produced Books from WTBBL by Herrick Heitman

Here are some books that have been recently added to the collection and are now available for your enjoyment. These downloadable audio books are added to our website as each book is completed. Digital cartridge copies are also available for checkout.

Audio: Adult Fiction

Sand by Will James.

A story set on the Great Plains where a man and his horse find a common bond amid their triumphs and tragedies. Narrated by Laurie Bialik. 1996. 8 hours 30 minutes. Digital Book DBW 8259. Also available as a downloadable digital book from WTBBL.

Audio: Adult Nonfiction

Sky Time in Gray's River: Living For Keeps in a Forgotten Place by Robert Michael Pyle.

The author follows the people, plants, and animals of Gray's River, a small town in southwest Washington, through the seasons. Winner of the 2007 National Outdoor Book Award for natural history literature. 2007. Narrated by David Ritt. 9 hours 30 minutes. Digital Book DBW 8014. Also available as a downloadable digital book from WTBBL.

Braille: Adult Fiction

Invisible Lives by Anjali Banerjee.

Lakshmi Sen uses her magical ability to perceive secret longings in others to bring happiness to the customers in her mother's Seattle sari shop. When she meets all-American Nick Dunbar, her powers seem to desert her, making the choice between him and her Indian fiancé a seemingly impossible task. 4 volumes. 2006. Braille Book BRW 1309.

Braille: Adult Nonfiction

The Way We Ate: Pacific Northwest Cooking, 1843-1900 by Jacqueline B. Williams.

The pioneers and homesteaders in the Pacific Northwest raised and prepared much of their own food. This well-researched book follows food from the barnyard and garden to the dinner table. It describes the ingredients, equipment, and techniques the cooks used. 6 volumes. 1996. Braille Book BRW 1302.

New Service Being Tested!

Are you unable to read the *Talking Book Topics* publication or do you have difficulty selecting books? WTBBL has volunteers available to go through the magazine with you and help you make requests. Call (206) 615-0400 or (800) 542-0866 and ask for a Readers Advisor to make a 15- to 30-minute appointment.

Based on a True Story: An Author Profile of Ben Mezrich by Steve Goettsch

Ben Mezrich has created his own highly addictive genre of nonfiction, digging up incredible true-*ish* stories of smart young men beating the odds and making tons of money. I say “true-ish” because of his unapologetic use of fiction techniques in what is presented as nonfiction. He takes a real-life tale and jazzes it up with narrative embellishments and imagined scenes. His stories are fast paced and definitely a fun read.

Perhaps his best known work in recent years is *The Accidental Billionaires* which was adapted into the film *The Social Network*. In it, Mezrich creates a version of the founding of Facebook, using mostly secondary sources. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and main character, refused to be interviewed for the book.

As a Harvard student in 2003, Zuckerberg, who had just been jilted by a girl, created a website called Facemash.com, which asked other students to rate Harvard women from side-by-side photos hacked from the university directory. This led to the birth of The Facebook, for which Mark enlisted one of his closest friends, Eduardo Saverin, to invest in the site. The two later had a mysterious falling out and ended up suing each other. The story of two Asian girls at a Harvard lecture who found the socially inept Zuckerberg more interesting than the talk by Bill Gates may be fact or fiction, but it makes a good story.

Mezrich was previously known for *Bringing Down the House*. This book tells the story of six MIT math students, hand-picked by an eccentric mastermind who developed a system for beating the game of blackjack. The students live dual lives, going to class during the week and flying out of Boston on the weekends to hit the casinos with tens of thousands of dollars in cash strapped to their persons. This unique system of card counting, verbal cues, body signals and role-playing took Las Vegas for more than \$3 million and eventually made them targets of revenge. The book was also made into the movie, *21*.

A lesser-known Mezrich book written in 2007 is called *Rigged: The True Story of the Ivy League Kid Who Changed the World of Oil, From Wall Street to Dubai*. In it, an Italian-American kid from Brooklyn, fresh out of Harvard Business School, enters the crazy world of Manhattan's Mercantile Exchange, where billions of dollars trade hands every week and fistfights break out on the trading floor. Partnering with a young Muslim with family connections, he embarks on a plan to revolutionize the oil-trading industry by creating the Dubai Mercantile Exchange. Along the way he lives in opulent luxury as a guest of the ruling sheiks.

All three books are available now as talking books from WTBBL:

The Accidental Billionaires - DB 69578
Rigged - DB/RC 68314
Bringing Down the House - DB/RC 55333

Volunteer Spotlight: Dagmar Cronn



I had a friend and colleague who retired before I did from Oakland University in southeastern Michigan. We are both chemists. She became a volunteer reader of introductory chemistry textbooks after retirement. I decided if she could do that, so could I, so we looked for a

place in the Seattle metropolitan area where I could read textbooks. Instead we found the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library.

Soon after I retired and moved to Seattle, I called WTBBL about volunteering. My assumption was that readers would be needed to tape books. But, it turns out there was a greater need for readers for the Evergreen Radio Reading Service.

Not being a professional or someone with experience looked like a major barrier, but I really wanted to be selected. I thought I needed an edge, so I decided to look through the list of ERRS programs that needed new volunteers and indicate an interest in something that others would not be interested in. I spotted a program called "Grocery Cart." This turned out to be a once-a-week taped program of the grocery ads for Western Washington. I figured nobody would want to read grocery ads, so I let the

staff know I would be willing to do the program. I auditioned and became the voice of “Grocery Cart”!

There are two ironies to this tale. First, I, who had never paid attention to newspaper ads, now read seven sets of grocery ads from cover to cover every week. The bigger irony is that my self-centered question of “Why would anyone want to read grocery ads?” never took into account my audience. The program turned out to be one of the most popular programs on the ERRS. This is because it is such an important service to people who cannot read the ads themselves.

I have become quite knowledgeable about the best prices at grocery stores each week. I can’t claim my own grocery bills have gone down, but it’s nice to know I can help my listeners keep theirs in check while finding out about items they wouldn’t otherwise consider. Variety is the spice of life...“And this week all spices are on sale at...”

Staff Profile: Alan Bentson



Alan Bentson is one of the two Readers Advisors at WTBBL. There are not many blind people working in this position for the National Library Service, so we are proud to have him working here, along with his colleague Wes Derby.

Alan was born in 1952 in Silver Spring, Maryland, but he grew up and got his education in Colorado. He went to public school until 10th grade, and completed high school at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind in Colorado Springs. “I benefitted from going to school in both

environments,” he said. “I think all blind children would broaden their horizons by experiencing both forms of education.” He later majored in English at Colorado College.

Alan’s start with WTBBL was a natural fit. “When I moved to Bremerton in 1981,” he said, “practically the first thing I did was contact the WTBBL to see if they needed volunteers, and I’ve been there in one capacity or another ever since.”

Alan worked for WTBBL as a page for two years, then started as a full-time Readers Advisor in January 1987, a time when talking computers were still in their early stages of development. “When I started, we didn’t have email or Internet or braille displays. I couldn’t even transfer calls or put people on hold. The changes in my job have been amazing.”

Alan takes book requests, searches for titles that aren’t listed in the library’s catalog, enters information into the catalog, adjusts patron files to make sure the computer selects the right books and sends them often enough, and much more.

“Every time some new innovation comes out like the online catalog, or the ability to download books, people tell me that they’re sorry I’m out of a job. It never seems to happen, though. There are always lots of new questions to answer about the new technologies. That’s what I like about my job, the ability to improve our library service, one patron at a time.”

GiveBIG in 2012!

A huge round of thanks to WTBBL donors who individually have given more than \$46,000 since July 1, 2011! In addition, the library has received some very generous bequests totaling over \$280,000.

It is difficult to express our appreciation for all of you who give generously and regularly to WTBBL. Every year your gifts have helped us with extraordinary and unexpected expenses not covered by our increasingly tight budget. We know that you share your valuable resources with us and we are very honored to provide WTBBL's services to you.

We are also very grateful to patrons who have included us in their estate plans. As you can see, their gifts this year have been substantial. Most of those funds will go into our endowment at the Seattle Foundation to help provide us an ongoing funding stream that will help WTBBL stay on the leading edge of library services, even though state and federal support may decline over the years.

This year the Seattle Foundation is sponsoring a program called GiveBIG 2012. It is an opportunity for our patrons and friends to give a little or BIG during a one day blitz on May 2. In addition, gifts to WTBBL will be matched in proportion to the total percentage of gifts received that day. As a participating organization, WTBBL is also eligible to receive an additional \$1,000 in random drawings throughout the day. The Seattle Foundation doesn't take any of the funds...all money donated in WTBBL's name goes to the library.

We are participating this year to make it easy for anyone to give. Gifts to GiveBIG-WTBBL can be made on Wednesday, May 2, only at www.seattlefoundation.org. You

will need to use a credit card to give gifts through this secure website.

So mark May 2 on your calendar. You will be hearing more from us as we get closer to the GiveBIG date.